

A  
L E T T E R  
T O  
Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON,  
O N

His JOURNEY to the WESTERN ISLES.

By ANDREW HENDERSON, *K*

AUTHOR of the LIFE, of the Late

DUKE of CUMBERLAND.

*Procul o procul este profani. VIRG.*



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Printed for the Author, and Sold by J. HENDERSON, *West-*  
*minster Hall*; J. MILLAN, *Charing Cross*; J. WILLIAMS,  
*Fleet Street*; W. NICOL, *St. Paul's Church Yard*.





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# LETTER

TO

Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

SIR,

**A**S your journey to the Western Isles has occasioned a variety of publications, it may not be improper to send some thoughts upon the subject, as my knowledge of Scotland, and of the Isles has been somewhat considerable.

A production from a writer who passes a dictatorial sentence upon men of the most distinguished abilities, might have raised the curiosity of the public, which indeed has been much disappointed, as little or nothing

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has been found in your performance, except some few common observations, and an ill natured assertion that the poem of Fingal was a modern production in the last century: Beda, an antient author, who died in the year 735, began his ecclesiastical history of the Angles with a curious description of the situation of Britain, its antient inhabitants, and the produce of her Isles: he takes notice of the cattle and corn of Scotland, and the Orcades, the nature of her fowls, ærial, aqueous & domestic, her rivers abounding with fish, and her medicinal waters; the beauty and variety of her shells, on which he makes judicious and manly observations with her mines of brass, iron, lead, silver, and precious ores; all which you have in a manner totally neglected.

Had you given yourself the trouble to pry into the natural or artificial productions of North Briton, you might have deserved well of your country, but in this you have been greatly wanting, your time being spent rather in idle and trifling amusements, than in solid investigation and search. The city of St. Andrew's itself might have furnished matter for many manly and judicious remarks, it having been a semi-  
nary



nary of learning for more than a thousand years, and rendered a royal foundation in 1412, during the captivity of K. James I. then in England, but who had improved in the several branches of literature then in use, so well, and had conceived such an opinion of the English colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, that the University of St. Andrew's was modelled thereby: Here have been educated men of the highest literary merit: George Buchanan, whom you yourself affect to commend, was an alumnus there, so was Lord Napier the wonderful inventor of Logarithms, as also David Gregory, whose book of optics is a work coeval with the sun.

The reign of James II. was no less auspicious to the sciences than that of his father: He founded the college of Glasgow, anno 1453, and endowed it with every privilege in the power of a sovereign to grant, the diploma erecting it into an university being wrote in such ample terms, and in such elegant Latin, that I doubt if you Dr. Samuel Johnson could go beyond it; here men of real learning have frequently resided, among whom Mr. Robert Simpson, whose conic sections and other works are sufficient to enoble him to the latest posterity,

rity. What need I mention the two universities of Aberbeen and Edinburgh, the one founded by King James IV. the same who married lady Margaret Tudor, and the latter by King James VI. great grandson to the former prince, and who afterwards ascended the throne of England; both these universities have produced men of the most extensive knowledge and abilities.

The counties of Berwick and East Lothian so beautifully diversified with trees, and with corn, so well peopled, so full of villages and gentlemens seats, so remarkable for the fine situation of three royal boroughs, might claim the attention of a stranger come to observe; I am sure no country abounds in better wheat and is crowned with more exuberant harvests: Here are many mines of coal, works of salt, and the coast is one continued fishery, neither is Fife inferior to the Lothians; it consists of 200,000 inhabitants, one city, thirteen royal boroughs and was frequently the residence of kings, its coals and salt are inexhaustible: Here are beautiful gardens, some of them laid out in the nicest taste and nutritive of any species of trees; the gardens of Sir Robert Henderson, both at Fordel and Otterstoun, may vie with any I have seen;

seen; strange you should so much dwell upon the want of trees in a country where garden ground does so much abound.

Your crossing over to Dundee, has indeed taken up some writing, while the meandrings of the Tay the finest river in Scotland is almost neglected, and indeed so has the town, tho' but few excell it in pleasantness of situation, neatness of streets, stateliness of buildings, extent of prospect, convenience of living, and adapted to every public utility; it stands in the neighbourhood of a district as remarkable for fine wheat as any in the British empire. Upon the Tay stands the castle of Broughtie, first built by Agricola, the same who on the moor of Munrouman not far from Dundee routed with a terrible slaughter anno 85, the united army of the Britons, then commanded by the Galdach, i. e. the Caledonian King.

It seems you have been in great haste when at Aberbrothick, a very beautiful town; and once so remarkable for a large and voluminous abbey, where not only parliaments were held, but the ashes of kings and princes were deposited; the letter wrote from the nobility of Scotland to the Pope, on the 13th of April 1320, and dated at Aberbro-

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thick is in such pure Latin, that I doubt much if yourself could exceed it; you might indeed pretend in an assuming tone to condemn, but sure I am, your censures like some of your observations would be all founded. At this very time is to be seen the burial place of William the Lyon, whose ashes were interred there.

'Tis needless to follow you thro' your dry and tedious perambulation till your arrival in Coll, where it seems you spent more time than in places of greater consequence, for I truly believe, that among the Western Isles there is not one more barren in its soil, or of fewer natural advantages; the island is about 12 miles long, and 4 broad at a medium, but so poor that there are not in it above sixty families, or in other words, not above six hundred inhabitants: it has neither church, chapel or any place of worship. Tyriff, and it form but one parish; and the former is by far the most populous, as it contains about 2 thousand inhabitants, though but eight miles long and four broad; the name of the Isle itself is from the galick Tyriff, the country of the racers; there being a plain about a mile over, as fine as any in the universe, and having in the middle a rising every way  
delightful;



delightful ; it has the finest hard sands to be met with ; its horses are small, like those of Shetland, but more spirited, lively, and better shaped ; the name of the harbour Scaranish is half Danish, half Irish, but many of the Hamlets are entirely from the Danes, Kirkipol, Heylepol, Hulapul, and Crossapul, it's soil is capable of any improvement, and at this very time the proprietor the Duke of Argyle has a thousand pound sterling per annum of rent from it. Here are some beautiful caves, and at the southern part a considerable high mountain, from whence on the 13th of December 1737, I had perhaps as full a view of the Hebrides as perhaps ever any person had before or since.

It was about eight in the morning when by means of a strong and lively refraction, I beheld this wonderful sight, the morning was adorned with the refulgent beams of the east, and appeared in her saffron dress ushering in the sun as he advanced. From the time of my being on the summit, till the upper limb of the sun appeared was half an hour, during which the Isles became gradually more visible ; when half up, the view was most distinct, but when wholly up it was fainter. From this place I be-

held the feveral ifles with wonder and a-  
 ftonifhment, and only lament that I did  
 not adore the God of nature fufficiently  
 for the fight that I faw. The ifles except  
 fuch as were hid by the higher, or lay too  
 near to be difcerned then, appeared to ad-  
 vantage: The Ifle of Skie which is near  
 forty two miles long and eight broad at a  
 medium, and whose hamlets and harbours  
 are generally from the Danifh language,  
 was abundantly difcernible, the fouthern  
 parts of the long ifle were no lefs fo, Barra  
 an ifland five miles over, and at the foot of  
 fouth Uift appeared like a fugar loaf: The  
 Ifle of Mull about 24 miles long and generally  
 broad, was very vifible, as was Jona 2 miles  
 long, that once famous feminary of learn-  
 ing, and burial place of the Scottifh Kings:  
 Cairnburgh, a fmall ifland, about half a  
 mile long, and naturally fo ftrong by means  
 of an impetuous current that no fhip could  
 lye againft it, was apparent, notwithftand-  
 ing it is fo contiguous to Mull, as to be fe-  
 parated by a channel only 500 yards over;  
 here are the remains of a fort built by the  
 Danes, who alfo gave it the name; Gome-  
 tra and Ulva, being fmall, feemed by reason  
 of their nighnefs to form but one continent  
 with Mull; but to the W. & S. of thefe, the  
 Ifland of Jura about 24 miles long and 16  
 broad,

broad, appeared whole and entire; its paps  
vitz two high mountains rose gradually by  
means of the sun's refraction in the form of  
a sugar loaf, and making nine tenths of a  
regular cone, the diameter of whose base is  
each about 130 yards, and the height about  
500; to the south of this, lyes the island  
of Ifla, only separated by a found, and in  
extent 24 miles long and equally broad; it  
was the residence of the lord of the isles,  
and is now worth an hundred thousand  
pound sterling: It is seperated by a channel  
about 21 miles over from Ireland, of which  
I had as clear a view as if seen by the naked  
eye in a clear day at the distance of 20 miles,  
for in September 1766, the coast of France  
did not appear more visible about ten  
in the morning from the gate of Dover Cas-  
tle, than did the coast of Ireland from the  
mountain of Tyriff: However, this exten-  
sive view was lost in the horizon; in this  
manner I continued two hours, when the  
whole were absorded in the brightness of the  
sun. How did it become me to say with ex-  
tasy? how wonderful are thy works O God?  
every one of which is an earth full of thy  
wisdom? Never man had an ampler view  
of them at one time, a view ten thousand  
times nobler than what could be conveyed  
by a map, or any other representation.

But



But, Sir, as you dwell so long on Coll, 'tis astonishing you saw nothing of M'Lean the poet, a man so universally known there and in Tyriff, and this leads to consider your assertion that the poem of Fingal was modern, and composed in the last century.

On entering into this debate, I would beg to inform you, that I am no way connected with James M'Pherson, nor yet Mr. Becket the publisher of Fingal, these gentlemen are abler than I to refute your argument; the former being a native Highlander, the Irish language was natural to him, whereas by me, it was but partly acquired, besides as the M'Pherson's are the most ancient branch of the Clancattan, and so numerous as to possess the whole district of Badenoch, and to consist of 500 heads of families, and so high minded as every one to be called by the name of the farm they live in; 'tis strange you did not mention any of the battles between them and the clan Cameron, which were frequently exceeding fierce; for I remember in April 1741—M'Pherson of Innernachan, shewed me the spot where the Camerons and M'Phersons fought a pitched battle, whereon according to him the latter were victorious,  
but



but when talking to the Camerons on the subject, I was told a quite contrary tale ?

I do not remember to have heard much of heroic poetry in Earse, while in the north Highlands, but indeed in the west where the Earse is more pure and incorrupted, I heard of some sublime productions in that language.

Mr. M'Lean of Leadh, brother to Hector M'Lean, of Coll, told me at Breakachie, that M'Lean the poet had by him compositions as elevated and sublime as any to be met with in Homer or Virgil : I saw the manuscript in Colls hand, and heard him read several passages every way heroic : I own that the district of Morvern, which is but barren and does not exceed 50£ per annum, does not seem to me to have been the scence of action ; it certainly was another Morvern, from whence the present has derived its name.

If the scene of action happened in Morvern, there occurs a pretty strong argument that the poem of Fingal was either of a much older date than you would admit, or else that the composer had purposely passed over an incident which might have been wrought

wrought up to a perfect embellishment of any Epic Poem.

The harbour of Tobermorrie in the Isle of Mull is almost opposite to the western part of Morven, and separated from it by a sound about a mile over, nor ever did I read the striking account of the sea fight between the Phenician and Egyptian fleets so nobly described in the second book of Telemachus, without Tobermorrie (i. e. the king's Great Well) occurring to my mind; it lies within six miles of the ocean, and forms a beautiful deep bay in the form of a Demi Ellipse, bounded by the transverse axis, the length of which from the rock of Muisnish to the upper end of the little island Calva, is three miles nearly, and its Demi longuate running into the shore is about a mile, it is on every point sheltered from the winds, and the short sound between Calva and Mull might be a place of safety for numbers of small craft, as the same is about half a mile long, and two hundred yards broad at a medium.

Sure I am the harbour of Tobermorrie deserved a place in Fingal, fully as well as Tenedos in the Æneid or Lemnos itself in the Iliad.

Besides

foremast



foremast still standing, and her stern but little festered or corrupted : However, the hatchways were so strongly barricaded, that it was impossible to get into the cabin or hull, where 'tis thought the money was deposited, which in the opinion of every person was very considerable, as the military chest for paying the troops was there.

Had any person intended to pass a compliment on James M'Pherson, he could not have thought of a nobler than that of styling him the author of Fingal.

The several epic poems that have appeared in the world, do in most things resemble each other, whereas Fingal is almost an original; many things in the Iliad and Æneid are alike, whole lines, nay periods have been translated, though it is not in the nature of a genius to be a copiest, and when he does copy he falls short of the original, a just punishment for having clogged his own invention with the fetters of imitation; when he appears an original then he excels; the affront given by Æneas to Queen Dido, being the assigned cause for a stated enmity between Rome and Carthage, and the calling out of the womb of time, a series of heroes from Æneas to Augustus Cæsar, are perhaps



perhaps nobler Episodes than ever entered into the heart of any other poet. Lucan undertook a poem, the subject of which was a recent history : the nighness of the times and notoriety of the event were a clogg to his poetical invention.

The greater the subject the greater the difficulty : Cæsar and Pompey were certainly men of more consequence than Agamemnon or Æneas, and the war waged before the walls of Troy, were but frays of children when compared with the civil wars of Rome, in which her most warlike sons fought for the empire of the world.

No characters were better drawn than those of Cato, of Cæsar and of Pompey ; the gods are laid aside, as fables more adapted to the age of Priam and Latimus, than to the wars of Rome, wherein Cæsar gave a deadly wound to the superstition of the druids, by commanding to cut trees in the forest of Marseilles, in order to be made into warlike instruments, notwithstanding the frightful stories, that the wood was haunted by Furies, and that immediate death would be the fate of him who should strike the blow : If the author of Fingal

was indebted to any poet it was to Lucan, since each of them sung real not imaginary heroes, and yet the presumption is that the Fingal was prior to the Pharsalia.

Where is the improbability of a poem being wrote in the Earse language, more than in the Latin or Greek? the rage and passion of superiors, the valour and ferocity of inferiors being no less among the speakers of Earse, than those of Greek and of Latin: many words of the latter are derived from the former, as Arduus from the celtic ard high, solstice from sol, and that from seul the eye, amunition from munio to fortify and that from mun the back, animated from the Greek and Latin animus, and that from the celtic anam the soul; the Earse language is full, strong, manly and significant; it can be turned into every species of versification, and originally had an alphabet of its own.

You certainly have heard of the book of Psalms, or collection of Poems made by Ezra the Priest, and as much preferable to those of Greece or Rome, as the meridian light of the sun is to the morning or evening twilight; the subject of the first is the great God, his works of creation, providence

dence and redemption, whereas that of the latter is various, sometimes of fictitious deities, sometimes of kings who had deluged the earth with blood; at another time of wrestlers, racers, coursers and forcerers; or if you will of Cæsar and the sun: Had you read the Psalms with that attention, which you would fain have people think you had given to the plays of Shakespear, you would have spoken less illiberally of Mr. Knox and the other reformers of North Britain, " Tumults and violence, nay ruffians of reformation " are phrases which an Englishman should never drop from his pen: And what is more you have attributed to the " waste of reformation " the ruins of the cathedral of Elgin; whereas that stately structure was destroyed almost 200 years before the reformation, and that by the Earl of Buchan, from a pique at the bishop of Murray, anno 1347, after it had stood 127 years. Other noble edifices fell a victim to rage and not to the reformation: The famous abbey of Melrose was destroyed by the English in 1544, that of Dryburgh by the same, Aberbrothwick was burnt by accident, and the cathedral of Aberdeen which had been ninety years in building was after standing twenty years ruined by the barons of the Mearns, who demolished the monasteries



monasteries of the black and grey Friars, robb'd the cathedral, spoiled it of its costly jewels and ornaments, destroyed the chancel, and shipped the lead, bells and other utensils for Holland, with an intent to dispose of them there, but in this they were disappointed, for the whole was sunk not far from the Girdleness, almost in sight of the town. Was one to form a judgment of you from your words in p. 48 about this matter, I should be apt to conclude you was a Roman Catholic: "I hope every reader" "will rejoice that this cargo of sacrilege" "was lost at sea." I presume that the order of council for taking away the lead that covered the cathedral of Elgin was long after, I am apt to believe it was in the time of Montrose, anno 1645, he had a numerous band of Roman Catholics, viz. 1800 M<sup>r</sup> Donalds from the north of Ireland, and nearly the same number from the Hebrides, who were of the same principles.

As you are ignorant of the Earse, I must beg leave to inform you, that the version of the Psalms in that tongue is as noble, elevated and melodious as that in the English by Tate and Brady.

Your



Your interence from Mr. Hector M'Leans saying that he did not use the Earle translation of the new testament. because he could make the text more intelligible to his auditors, by an extemporary version, is far from being just; for the language of the translation is no less the language of the isle of Coll, than the language of the English translation is that of Sheepy, Thanett or the Isle of Wight.

You was much mistaken, in thinking  
 “ that you lost some of his good will by  
 “ treating an heretical writer with more re-  
 “ gard than in his opinion an heretic could  
 “ deserve.” As I knew the gentleman, so  
 I can with freedom and pleasure remove any  
 sinistrous sneer at his “ orthodoxy which  
 “ you honoured not much censuring his as-  
 perity.” Of which last word if I can have  
 any idea, it was very improperly applied to  
 Mr. M'Lean : Heretic is in no use with the  
 Scots clergy, and more frequent in Italy  
 than in North Briton. I wish the ill na-  
 tur'd epithets, sectary and hereitic were ne-  
 ver to be heard : Your acquaintance with  
 the Rev. Mr. M'Queen in Skye, and the  
 other Mr. M'Lean in Mull, was a sufficient  
 recompence for your tour to the Isles, they  
 being ministers of great learning, politeness  
 and

and generosity; I was intimate with them, and heartily join in whatever can be said either to their praise, or to that of Mr. M'Leod of Raafa, and Sir Allan M'Lean: I wish they had seen your manuscript before it went to the press; many errors, natural, historical, and geographical would have been corrected, and a parcel of idle tales more fit for children than men of understanding would have continued in darkness or oblivion; your forced conclusions so unbecoming a man the least acquainted with syllogism would have been suppressed.

These gentlemen would have told you that the Earse language is adapted to poetry, and that the meridian brightness thereof, was in the time of Columbus and his followers, it being not only the vernaculum of the isles, but of Scotland in general, as the names of rivers, and their districts with other local designations abundantly show; according to Beda, there were no less than five different tongues spoken in Britain at one period, viz, that of the Angles who came from Jutland, that of the Britons, that of the Picts, and that of the Scots, besides the Latin language, which from the perusal of the scriptures became common to the whole: The Earse was then in the highest

est esteem; the English nobility were sent to Scotland to be educated; nay Oswin, King of Mercia, and of the southern provinces, was baptized and brought-up in the Scots seminaries, and instructed in their language, so as to speak it fluently: Cedda whom we formerly named, is called interpreter vigilantissimus, and Eatta Abbott of Melrose is termed vir reverendissimus ac mansuetissimus from the celtic manis (pity) I fear your warm and adventitious expressions about the reformers, will preclude you from this last appellation, no less than your sneering expression, P. 276. " A Scotch-  
 " man must be a very sturdy moralist who  
 " does not love Scotland better than truth,  
 " he will always love it better than enquiry,  
 " and if falsehood flatters his vanity, will  
 " not be very diligent to detect it, neither  
 " ought the English to be much influenced  
 " by Scotch authority." Strange that a man pensioned by the Government should write so unlike a gentleman, revive the national distinction abolished by the Union, the very first article of which ought to make you ashamed.

If you love truth better than England, pray think charitably of your fellow subjects? For the North Britons whom you mention, de-

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serve



serve your good opinion, difference of coun-  
trys is nothing at all, 'tis what every good  
man looks on with detestation according to  
the words of Mr. Hill, in the Poem called  
the North Star.

Perish the peevish thought, to custom grown,  
That makes Men blind to merits, but their own ;  
Britons and Russians differ but in name,  
In natures sense, all nations are the same ;  
One Universe, claims one Creators care,  
And man is reasons subject every where.

This quotation is from a real gentleman who  
without doubt had a chearfulness in his own  
breast, known only to those who feel it,  
when speaking or writing in terms expressive  
of universal good-will, poor man I wish I  
could say the same thing of you ? 'Tis hoped  
that neither Englishmen nor Scotchmen  
will be influenced by your authority, for I  
assure you it is not good.

Had you perused that glorious compo-  
sition the firstpsalm, you wou'd have nipped  
your peevishness in the bud, but now you  
sit in the seat of the scorner : Had you read  
Beda who I believe loved truth and peace,  
you would have found that in the time of  
Columbus and his followers, people could  
read,

read, write and investigate things with propriety: he was present at the contest between the delegates about keeping Easter, which happened in 664 and when he himself was 19 years old, universally respected and regaled: Charity which thinketh no evil inclines me to believe that the image of God is every where, that there are men of real integrity in all countries, and to my certain knowledge those whom you mention are every way so.

The corruption of the Celtic flowed from the invasion of the Danes, no less than the corruption of the Latin, from the irruption of the Goths and Vandals into Italy: While these possessed the Hebrides, they built forts, in the most considerable isles, and introduced their language with their arms: The conquest of small islands, separated by dangerous sounds, became easy to people who had large vessels, and provided they had not invaded the main land, they might have retained the isles for many centuries, as the fleet of Scotland was not able to cope with that of Denmark.

The destruction of the Danes upon the continent was the cause of abandoning the isles, yet not without leaving behind them

every vestige of cruelty : They pulled down forts and castles, destroyed churches, violated the monuments of the dead, burnt the beautiful monastery of Icolmkill, that repository of manuscripts and records, that seat of the Muses and nursery of the learned : It is now no more than a pendicle of a farm possessed by a tenant of the Duke of Argyle ; the noblest stones, carv'd in the most curious manner, are now to be found among the dykes and enclosures : It constitutes a part of the parish of Ross, at the southern end of Mull, of which last place you have given an erroneous account, when you say Page 320. “ The isle of Mull is perhaps “ in extent, the third of the Hebrides, it is “ not broken by waters or shot into promontories, but is a solid and compact “ mass, of breadth nearly equal to its “ length.—“ I am willing to estimate it at “ about 300 square miles.” So that according to you, the length of the isle of Mull may be 15 miles, and one third i, e 586 yards nearly.

That it is longer I am positive, for from the Ferry, that separates it from Lorn, to the Western Point, is 24 computed Miles, which I have passed over oftner than once, when Tutor to Collonel Dugald Campbell, whose father



father was sheriff in those parts, and extremely kind to me : About half way stands the ruinous castle of Aros, at which is a water, a bay, and a promontory; three miles to the south of which water stands Killicronan and Teloan, at the head of a very large bay, whose two shores, the one stretching twelve miles westward, and the other twenty miles southwards, form almost a right angle, or at least an angle of eighty degrees, besides almost opposite to the inch the residence of Sir Allan M'Lean, the shore stretching southerly, bends somewhat eastwardly so as to form an inward angle of about 150 degrees, nor do I believe that between the shore stretching westward from Killicronan to Treisnish opposite to Cairnburgh, and that from Aros to the west point of Muishnish, over against Coll, there is any one part broader than eight miles : There are other inlets which might further expose your strange and glaring assertions.

I should not have dwelt so long on this, if it was not to show what little credit is to be given to a man who can represent things with impunity, and in the second place to draw an argument in favour of the antiquity of Fingal, which if composed since the Danish invasion, it is somewhat singular, that  
such

such desolating scenes should not so much as be touched at.

Can any person believe that the invaders got possession of these without bloodshed? though many ears and obelisks erected in different parts show the contrary: It is likewise reasonable to suppose that the conflagration was general, that the burning of Icolmkill would afford as tremendous a blaze by means of the Firth between it and Mull, as did that of the temple of Æsculapius at Carthage, I had almost said that of Troy by the image formed in the sea of Dardanelles.

You should have had more sense than to be prejudiced against a country which in most places you depreciate; you say that  
 “ the students for the most part go boys to  
 “ the Scots universities, and depart before  
 “ they are men, they carry with them little  
 “ fundamental knowledge, and therefore  
 “ the superstructure cannot be lofty.” By  
 fundamental knowledge I presume you mean  
 Shakespear’s plays, in which they are certainly not conversant, but then they are at the age of fourteen or fifteen, adepts in the whole variety of grammar, can turn a piece of English into good Latin and vice versa,  
 well

well acquainted with prosody, and all the kinds of versification; the grammar schools are generally well supplied with men extremely well skilled in classical learning, and in their business they are diligent and laborious.

You say " Men bred in the universities  
 " of Scotland, cannot be expected to be  
 " often decorated with the splendours of  
 " ornamental erudition, but they obtain a  
 " mediocrity of knowledge, between learn-  
 " ing and ignorance, not inadequate to the  
 " purposes of common life; which is I be-  
 " lieve very widely diffused among them,  
 " and which countenanced in general by a  
 " national combination so inviolable that  
 " their friends cannot defend it, and actu-  
 " ated in particulars, by a spirit of enter-  
 " prize so vigorous, that their enemies are  
 " constrained to praise it, enables them to  
 " make their way to employment, riches,  
 " and distinction."

Here, Sir, might be room for a lecture to explain your meaning, and sufficient subject to employ two cavillers for hours; was I to interpret it, perhaps I should pay but a sorry compliment either to the depth of  
 your



your judgment, or to the goodness of your heart.

But what do you mean by the splendours of ornamental erudition: If you mean a man of learning, then there are many in Scotland, who understand one thing well, and has such a general knowledge of other things as to yield satisfaction to himself, and be agreeable to those with whom he converses: The institution of universities favours this definition, which if not a just one, I am afraid you will be obliged to renounce the name of learned.

But what is your mighty learning; perhaps an acquaintance with Shakespear's plays, and a study of the English language, so as to compile a dictionary under the patronage of a stage player, a task to which many were more adequate as more fully masters of the different tongues whereof the English is composed.

The body of the English language is German: The generality of words in one syllable are from thence, as are some of two, but very few of three, less of four, and not one of five; almost all the words ending in ion as action, creation, division, are from the  
Latin;

Latin; words ending in ty are under the same predicament, as cavity, gravity, divisibility: The most part of the words in or are also from the Latin or French: A proper knowledge of these and the Greek would enable a man to do fully as much as you have done, while an acquaintance with the Hebrew, the Spanish, Portugueze and Celtic or Earse, would assist him to do much more, and after all what is the knowledge of the English language, to that of the Sciences, or if you will to that of classical learning: I have been acquainted with people who knew the English poets well, and yet were not masters of 100 Greek or Latin lines: If a deep search into mathematical learning constitutes a real scholar, then Scotland has produced a Napier the inventor of logarathims, a Keil and a M'Laurin, which last understood the French and Latin so well as to correspond in those with Doctor Celsius, professor of mathematics at Upsal, and with M. de Clairault and M de Maupertuis, who communicated to him their progress in measuring, anno 1736, a degree of the Meridian so near the pole as Torneo in Sweden: To him nothing was difficult if within the reach of the human understanding, and in consequence of this correspondence, and the Data sent him from these great men, he about three days

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before

before his death, though in a languishing condition, computed the axis of the equator to be to that of the poles as 122 to 121 nearly: How much he was master of the Latin may be seen in his *Geometria Organica*, which he dedicated to Sir Isaac Newton, whose knowledge of men and of things, and unconfined goodness of heart would not suffer him to speak in the peevish manner you have done; if a profound knowledge of the sacred scriptures proclaim a man learned, there are many such at this day in Scotland, as Dr. Patrick Cumming, Dr. Henry, Dr. Wiseheart, Dr. Plenderleith, and Mr. James Nasmyth; in experimental and moral philosophy, and all the branches of physick, the universities of Scotland are universally admired; if translation be an accomplishment, then Scotland can boast of two translators, viz. George Buchanan and Dr. Arthur Johnston, who wrote the Latin tongue in all the elegance of the Augustan age, and in the several kinds of verse used by the Greek and Latin poets: I have known men in Scotland who could explain a classic author with any in the world, and if the justness of translation is more to be considered than the style, then the version of Virgil by Dr. Gavin Douglass, Bishop of Dunkeld, anno 1520 is preferable



ble to that of Trapp, of Pitt, or of Whar-  
ton.

I am sorry to find you advancing that the cathedral of Glasgow was the only one left standing "in the rage of reformation" since the cathedral of St. Giles at Edinburgh is still whole and entire; it will readily be allowed that the seizing on church lands was the occasion of letting cathedrals go to decay, but that the reformers pulled them down is in great part erroneous; many of these were very antient, that of Glasgow was built in 1135, and that of Dumferling in 1057 by Malcolm Kenmore, i. e. Malcolm the Great, in whose time, and not before, the English language and titles of dignity were introduced into Scotland: He had been an exile from his native country, even when a child at the breast, but being nephew to the Earl of Northumberland, he had a liberal education and was trained up at the court of Edward the confessor, where he had occasion to be acquainted with the Duke of Normandy, afterward known by the name of William the Conqueror. While at Westminster School he was frequently with the royal family, and being restored to the throne by the assistance of the English, he in gratitude married Margaret the

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sister

sister of Edgar Atheling, a woman every way brilliant in her character, and glorious in the goodness of her heart, \* she was a blessing to the Scots and English in her life time, and was in a manner adored by them both: She saved many of the latter from horror and all the devastations of conquest, and as to the former, she erected manufactures and schools; her memory is still in the highest veneration, Margaret (a pearl) is the most frequent name in North Britain, and the passage over an arm of the sea called the Queen's Ferry, has its appellation from her.

It is evident thro' your book, that you are neither a friend to North Britain nor her sons; tho' no man ought to be an enemy to a country, least he should become an enemy to truth, the ready way of becoming a stranger to the pleasing entertainment arising from a good conscience: how ungrateful the task to heighten the defects of a country, depreciate their seminaries of learning, and deprive them of the honour of an epic poem, little inferior to that of Dante the Italian, or Camouens the Portugeuze. How unfortunate for your character, not to pry into the advantages the isles might be of to the

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\* See my Life of William the Conqueror, p. 157.

the main land, or not to account for the frequent impression made by these islanders upon the state : In this I beg leave to point out some of your defects, which are but too numerous and glaring not to be adverted to.

In your perambulation along the east coast of Scotland, you have taken notice of trifles, and passed over things of moment ; the ecchoing grove in the neighbourhood of Aberbrothwick has eluded you, as have the fine salmon rivers and stately bridges built over them : Gardens, plantations of timber, nay woods have escaped you, and as for Murray a most plentiful country, abounding with wheat and blessed with an inexhaustible fishery, you have said but little, tho' three stately structures, viz. Elgin, Kinloss, and Pluscardy can be traced out, and a very high obelisk in commemoration of the defeat of the Danes be still standing, yet all these gave place to the incident of being on the road where Macbeth met the witches, who predicted his advancement to the throne? this last is a discovery which I really believe no mortal found out but yourself : It seems witchcraft is the same in all ages, since the forcerers who met Macbeth used the same articles of enchantment as did Medea about



2000 years before Macbeth was born. In Murray are more gentlemens seats built of free stone and of considerable antiquity, than in any other county of the same extent, and at Nairn where is a good harbour, a fine salmon river and the remains of a castle, there are vast mountains of sand, which were covered much about the time when those of Goodwin began. Could you have vouchsafed to give an account of the rise of fort George at Arderleir, it would not have been ill-timed, as it is built after the model of Bergenopzoom.

From the earliest period, a castle was thought to be absolutely necessary at Inverness, and accordingly it continued on one spot, till Oliver Cromwell blew it up, and erected another near the harbour; at the restoration this was pulled down and the old one being rebuilt, continued to be augmented with many out-works at a vast expence, particularly in 1732, till the 18th of March 1746, when major George Grant surrendered it into the hands of the young chevalier, who ordered the works to be blown up.

After the battle of Culloden, the Duke of Cumberland saw the impropriety of re-building

re-building a fort at Inverness, though he approved the erecting of one at Arderfer, opposite to Rossmarkney in Rosshire, between which places is a gutt two miles over, beginning at the great sea that spreads between Norway and Scotland.

In your way to fort Augustus, you passed over or at least nigh to the spot, where the clans of M'Donald and Frazer fought almost to their mutual extinction; tho' this battle be taken notice of in our annals, yet the cause of the broil is not hinted at, and yet the same is acknowledged by the descendants of both families.

The younger Clanranald was married to a daughter of Lord Lovat, whom maternal fondness kept in Morwich in the Aird, till she should be delivered of her first child. She brought forth a son, and in the mean time her husband died; some years after Lord Lovat demanded the estate for his grandson; the M' Donald's refused to admit the claim, alledging that the child of the marriage had died, and that they did not chuse a Chieftain, a Frazer, and an impostor. As Clanranald was possessed of lands, viz. Knoidart and Moidart upon the continent, so it was judged, these could  
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be easily seized: Each clan armed in support of the right contended for, and the M'Donalds of Glengary and Keppoch joined those of Clanranald, who are certainly the last branch from the Lord of the Isles: All these marched to the district of Stratherrick in order to save their own lands from becoming the scene of action: On the 15 of July, 1544, during the minority of an infant Queen, and the distracted condition of the Kingdom, governed by a stranger, a Regent, a Princess, unacquainted with our language, our customs, and our laws, they came in sight of each other at a common 12 miles from Inverness: A champion of the Frazers, marched out to challenge the Host of the M'Donalds to single Combat: A champion of these walked out to meet him: They accordingly met half way between the Lines, saluted each other with their bonnets and a flourish of their swords, which being over they entered upon action, now out, now in, now here, now there, shifting in their turn, while the respective Clans stood almost motionless, and anxious for the event: After an hour's contest, M'Donald prevailed, and taking out the dead man's heart, fixed it upon a pole, and moved forward, while it was bleeding and the Clans began to follow: The Frazers no way intimidated, stood their ground



Ground, and sustained as terrible an onsett as is to be found in the Iliad; they fought almost to the extirpation of each other, and the shattered remains retired each to their respective homes: Among the killed on the side of the Frazers were eighty new married men, each of whose widows in a few months after, brought forth a son.

'Tis surprising you did not endeavour to account for the frequent disturbances given by the Islanders to the Kings of Scotland, as the same is but gently touched at, notwithstanding the cause be every way obvious.

The Lord (i. e. Thearn) of every Island, was in a manner King thereof, and the people seeing none greater, were insensibly led to reverence him the more: The descendants from his family were daily about him, honoured him as their head and support: Their vicinity to the main land, gave them an opportunity to cross over unexpectedly, and even to advance far into the country, before a proper force could be raised to make head against them. One of these incursions gave rise to the family of Douglass, anno 767, when Donald Bane, i. e. White came with numerous forces from the western isles,

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and was encountered by Soluathius then King of Scotland, whom he almost routed : A man of uncommon prowess rallied some of the fugitives at a distance, returned with them to the charge, and wrested the victory out of the hands of the conqueror when all was over, and the particulars of the action were laid before the King, he desired to see the man who had been the deliverer of his country : On this one pointed at him saying Sholto Douglass, (see that black grey man) from thence replied the King, that shall be his name.

From their nighness to each other, the inhabitants are jealous, and severally trained up to arms ; it being a maxim with them, that to secure peace, one ought to be always prepared for war : The tract of land from the north point of Lewis to the southern extremity of south Uist is about 120 computed miles, forming in a manner one island, tho' in three different places there is a channel, in which the sea ebbs and flows twice in 24 hours; the whole is about twelve miles over at a medium and possessed by distinct families, Lewis by the M<sup>c</sup> Kenzies and M<sup>c</sup> Leods which last possess Harris 12 miles long, part of north Uist 24 miles long, the other part is the property of the M<sup>c</sup> Donalds, as is south Uist, an isle equally long : The Militia of which

which is among the best in the British empire: Before the Union they received Wines from France in exchange for their black cattle, and at the easiest rate: But you have been in few isles and some of these inconsiderable, manifesting your credulity in every page. You say the isle of Mull is filled with M'Leans, whereas three fourths of it belongs to the Duke of Argyl, the name of the steward and principal taxmen is Campbell, contains three parishes, whereof Ulva, Scaffa, Gometra, Inch, Calva, Carnburgh and Jona, are constituent parts, and the inhabitants may be 5000.

Alas, you have not been desirous to detect the falsehoods that flattered your vanity, your account of the Scots Earse being grossly sophistical; you say it never was a written language or a cultivated tongue as the Welsh and Irish are; poor man, the Earse and Irish were originally the same, and now differ only in dialect, there are Irish or Earse manuscripts to be had both in Paris and in Rome, where the deficiencies of our own annals occasioned by the invasion of Foreigners, and intestine broils, are amply supplied, from Tacitus 'tis evident that the Galdeach or speakers of the Earse, were a nation which knew the use of writing, the deeds of their

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ancestors,



ancestors, the actions of their neighbours, of the Irish, the Germans and others upon the continent ; the feint glimmerings of a battle, fought on the declivity of Mount Grampus, arising from the name Munróuman Moor, and the tradition of a terrible slaughter being once upon it, are amply cleared up by the Roman historian : The heroic expression of Galgacus is generously recorded, “ As you advance into the field “ think on your ancestors, look forward “ on your posterity ? ” the genius of the times is set forth in all their ghastly attire : Sint omnes jugulati being the sentence of the conqueror upon the captives whenever any new prisoners were brought in.

Every nation has signs for preserving the memory of past transactions; the Egyptians had their hieroglyphics, the Chinese and Tartars their characters, which made up an alphabet at last, for writing and the matter on which it was impressed, had its formation, its birth, its infancy, nonage and maturity ; the Indians themselves have their symbols to perpetuate. Was any person to enter a Huskanawed Penn, the chief would shew ranged pieces of wood, describing the deeds of his ancestors, perhaps for 500 years back : If any of them killed a wild

wild beast, the same would be cut out so as to be distinguished, and the age of the warrior marked by notches. Suppose one of their Priest's should come to England and learn to write, would he not be able to convey his meaning in English characters. Every mortal knows the Hebrew may be wrote in these, as Samuel and other names. I own that the English alphabet, first used by the Romans after the destruction of Troy is a noble improvement, since every one of its letters is expressed either in one breath, or at most in one short syllable, whereas those of the Hebrew and Greek are mostly founded in two syllables, and sometimes in three; Strange that you will not allow as much sagacity to the speakers of Earse as to the Indians, especially as there was a Christian seminary among them; as also men of learning and probity: Can a man be *interpres vigilantissimus*, and yet unable to write or preach in his mother tongue? Every language is noble if rightly understood.

If the Earse was the language of the Scots in time of Columbus anno 565, and the Latin language was taught at that time, it follows that the Earse was written, since no dead language can be acquired but by comparing it with the living: This method was prescribed

scribed by Cicero to his son Marc, and is every where adopted ; nay the readiest way to learn a living language is by reciprocal translation : For my part I cannot look upon the fifth and sixth century as ages of total darkness, for there were good poets, pious divines, and men of curiosity : On the 14th of March 528 an eclipse of the sun was observed carefully from 1 o'clock till 3. On the 12th of July 540 was another, which began about 15 minutes after 2, and at 3 when nine digets were covered, some stars became visible and so continued almost half an hour, when the moon had advanced three digits beyond the eastern limb of the sun, they faded gradually, till absorbed in the broad day light of the luminary.

Your assertion that Scotchmen loved Scotland better than truth is peevish and false ; In Scotland the sacraments are solemnly administered, and church discipline exercised, the happy effects of which appear in this, that fewer people come to an untimely end through Scotland in 30 years, than at Tyburn in one ; nor can any Scotchman be branded with not being desirous to detect falshood, when it flatter'd his vanity except the Earl of Bute, and that in a matter you will not condemn.

Vain



Vain to find the colossus of learning, a man like himself of a good heart, and the parent of a numerous offspring, he procured you a pension of 300l. a year, but in every thing he was mistaken; you being but a novice in ancient and modern learning, a weak reasoner while your conjectures prove your malignity, and want of natural affection to your fellow subjects, whom policy and the sacred scriptures denominate the children of our King the common father of us all; and as you are without natural affection, a crime "worthy of death," I leave you with the second sight, the very notion of which during my abode for 15 months in the Isles, every person of common sense treated as a relick of Paganism introduced by the Danes who possessed the Hebrides for 160 years, a treasure indeed, being surrounded with an inexhaustible fishery, which might turn out to more advantage, and be more durable, than the pearls of India, or the golden mines of Peru.

I cannot conclude without observing that your ill natured phrase. "The Scots first took up arms against the royal family of Hanover," is a downright assertion that the whole part of the united kingdom called  
Scotland

Scotland was in actual rebellion, whereas there were but few, not above the hundred part of the inhabitants being Jacobite, even in the year 1715, when the friends of the government mustered up in its defence, the Dukes of Roxburgh and Douglass, with the Earls of Haddington, Rothes, Leven, and Loudon engaged as volunteers at the action of Sheriffmuir, where the Earl of Islay, who died Duke of Argyl received two wounds, and Archibald Douglass Earl of Farfar twenty two. John the second Duke of Argyle commanded the King's forces, and the late Duke of Argyle whose virtues I admired, having had the honour of being personally known to him, was chief Aid de camp on that ever memorable day.

I have only to add that I am perhaps your master in the knowledge of these things and of the Isles, which I wish some man of temper, and acquainted with the Earle would traverse and survey; though not decorated with the splendours of ornamental erudition, I yet either in Greek, Latin, or in English can keep up a logomachy at this diversion, for half an hour with you.

Incipe tu doctor, vis tu contendere mecum  
Maxime si tu vis cupio contendere tecum.

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